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SUBJECT: SOUCRE CLAIMS "SABOTAGE CAMPAIGN" MAY BE IN THE WORKS

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES THOMAS P. FUREY. REASONS 1.5 b, c, and d.

1. (S) Poloff met with a contact on December 23 to discuss the recent Appeals Court decision and other related topics. The source, Aliyu Adamu Jimeta, claimed that "a group" of political activists had considered sabotaging government infrastructure during the COJA games and the CHOGM meeting in Abuja in late 2003. Those plans had been shelved, he said. However, he commented that the same group of between five and ten individuals were "thinking that the time may be ripe to commence." The example he gave was the bombing of a wing of Lagos' Murtala Mohammed International Airport. He stated that the device would be "small enough to limit damage, but should scare travelers away from Nigeria."

2. (S) Poloff commented that "this is not the tactic" he would choose and changed the subject.

3. (S) Comment: Poloff has known Jimeta for over two years as a political operative from Adamawa state, home of the current Vice President Atiku Abubakar. He has never raised this topic previously and Poloff has had reason to question his motivation and speculated whether he could be working for the Nigerian government. His comments raise one of two concerns. The first possibility is that a group of dissidents, frustrated with the continuing corruption and the lack of resolution of the rigged 2003 elections, is ready to attack the Obasanjo regime. A campaign of this type was carried out in 1995-1998 during the Abacha regime. At that time, Embassy had doubts as to whether it was truly staged by dissidents intent on forcing out Abacha or if the regime was managing the "attacks" to bolster internal support for their unpopular government.

4. (S) Comment, cont.: The second possibility is that the increasing inability of the Obasanjo regime to maintain control of Nigeria's internal security and manage its image abroad is forcing Obasanjo to look for enemies outside in an effort to shift the blame for his unpopularity. Setting up and expelling a U.S. diplomat could, in the GON analysis, create some sympathy for an Obasanjo increasingly convinced of his own importance as the "saviour of Nigeria."

FUREY